

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

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LONG LIVE MAY DAY

Immigrant, worker unity can combat layoffs, cutbacks and racism

By Teresa Gutierrez

Once more, just as every year since 2006, there will be May Day demonstrations around the United States on May 1.

May Day actions, large and small, already signal an enormous political and social development. Large ones will have more impact, but no matter the size of the actions, these yearly marches have revived May Day in the U.S. They reflect two significant developments:

- The movement for immigrant rights, despite many difficulties and great odds, has not gone away. It audaciously remains sustained and alive.
- These demonstrations have a thoroughly class-conscious character. Because of the dire worldwide economic crisis facing the working class, this is perhaps what is most important about May Day.

Immigrants are organizing as workers. And they are appealing to other workers to join them. Immigrants are declaring that they are under attack as workers and they are calling on other workers to join them in the fight for the rights of all workers.

This is a great development. This appeal could lay the basis for a massive working class struggle that becomes generalized, where those with documents join those without, where workers from every race, age, gender, and sexual orientation come together in common interest against their oppressors. With this solidarity, bourgeois divisions and bourgeois thinking among workers will decrease and stop holding back the movement.

This kind of movement is desperately needed. Mass anger exists against the bail-out of the rich and the corporations. That anger must be seen in the streets.

As we watch the nightly news broadcasts and see yet another dreary statistic on the economy or hear that a flu epidemic could become a crisis of unprecedented proportions, workers should be reminded that the only thing that can stay the hand of attacks against the people is a movement of the workers and the oppressed.

This is the potential of the May Day demonstrations in the U.S. today.

May Day's history of struggle

In his book, "May Day: A Short History of the International Workers' Holiday," Philip

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The May 1st Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights held a press conference on April 27 to announce plans for the May Day rally and march scheduled for Union Square in New York on May 1. One of the main messages raised at the press conference is the demand that President Barack Obama pass fair and humane immigration reform which would include the elimination of deportations and raids against immigrant workers and their families.

Speakers at the press conference were Roberto, Day Laborers United; Asha Samad-

Matias, SAFRAD- Somali Association; Janis Rosheurel, Families for Freedom; Miguel Serafin, New Immigrant Community Empowerment; Larry Holmes, Bail Out the People Movement; Camilo Torres, NYU student; Fanny Guadalupe Moroch, Labor Cultural Center; Christina Hilo, BAYAN-USA; Comrade Shahid, Pakistani Freedom Forum USA; Luis Ramirez, immigrant rights activist; and Mike Gimbel, AFSCME Local 375. Teresa Gutierrez, coordinator of the May 1st Coalition, chaired the press conference.

—Report & photo by Monica Moorehead

MUNDO OBRERO EDITORIAL

PRIMERO DE MAYO

¡TODOS/AS A LA CALLE!

El Primero de Mayo es el Día Internacional de los/as Trabajadores/as. Comenzó en Estados Unidos hace mucho tiempo durante la lucha por el día de 8 horas de trabajo, pero esa historia no se conoce muy bien aquí por una buena razón. Los guardianes del capitalismo que nos imponen su ideología no quieren que los/as trabajadores/as y el pueblo oprimido sepan su propia historia de lucha.

Pero este año como todos los años, los/as obreros/as de todo el mundo participarán en manifestaciones, reuniones y otras acciones para celebrar el Día de los/as Trabajadores/as. En Cuba como en otros países socialistas, el Día de los/as Trabajadores/as es un día festivo que aplaude el papel de los/as trabajadores/as en la creación de una nueva sociedad.

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What's Next?

BAIL OUT
PEOPLE

▶ June 14-17 Detroit People's Summit/ Tent City

▶ May 31 NYC Economic Summit

▶ Sept. 19-20 Protest G20 in NYC

5, 7

Joint
CCNY/
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Police terrorism, the global economic crisis: Impact on workers, oppressed

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

A rise in reported incidents of police brutality and killings of civilians is taking place at the same time as the economic underpinnings of low-wage capitalism continue to deteriorate.

In regard to the anti-immigrant repression carried out in the U.S., an April 15 Human Rights Watch report pointed out that the overwhelming majority of forced removals are carried out for relatively benign reasons that do not pose any threat to the larger communities where the deportees live. Approximately 75 percent of all noncitizens deported from the country over the last 10 years, after serving prison and jail sentences, had been convicted of nonviolent offenses.

According to the HRW report, entitled “Forced Apart: Non-Citizens Deported Mostly for Nonviolent Offenses,” 20 percent of those forcefully ejected had been in the U.S. legally, sometimes for decades.

Alison Parker, deputy director of the U.S. Program of HRW and author of the April 15 report, said, “In 12 years of enforcing the 1996 deportation laws, no one bothered to ask whether ICE actually focused on the target group—undocumented immigrants convicted of serious, violent crimes. We now know that a good number of people who are here legally and who are convicted of nonviolent offenses are regularly swept into the dragnet.” (www.hrw.org)

HRW estimates that over 1 million people have been affected by these deportations through family separations and the consequent economic and social consequences of these actions carried out by Immigration Customs Enforcement, which operates under the rubric of the Department of Homeland Security.

“We have to ask why, in a time of fiscal crisis, significant immigration enforcement funds are being spent on deporting legal residents who already have been punished for their crimes,” says Parker. “Many of these people have lived in the country legally for decades, some have served in the military, others own businesses. And often, they are facing separation from family members, including children, who are citizens or legal residents.”

The African-American population has been severely affected by the misconduct and brutality of law-enforcement agencies throughout the country. Most of the killings are deemed as “justifiable homicide” by the prosecutor’s offices and these notions are often reinforced by the corporate media, which portrays African Americans as violent-prone and criminally-inclined.

During the summer of 2007, the publications ColorLines and the Chicago Reporter carried out a collaborative national investigation of police shootings in the 10 largest U.S. cities. African Americans were highly affected disproportionately as victims of fatal police shootings. The most highly noticeable areas where this phenomenon existed were in New York, San Diego and Las Vegas. In each of these urban areas, the percentage of African Americans killed by law enforcement was twice the number of their proportion within the population of these cities.

According to Delores Jones-Brown, who at the time of the study was the interim director of the Center on Race, Crime and Justice at John Jay College in New York: “There is a crisis of perception where African American males and females take their lives in their hands just walking out the door. There is a notion they will be perceived as

armed and dangerous. It’s clear that it’s not just a local problem.” (ColorLines, No. 41, Nov./Dec. 2007)

Beginning in 2001, “The number of incidents in which Latinos were killed by police in cities with more than 250,000 people rose four consecutive years, from 19 in 2001 to 26 in 2005. The problem was exceptionally acute in Phoenix, which had the highest number of Latinos killed in the country.” (ColorLines, No. 41)

“Unless we begin to hold these officers accountable in these cases, they’ll only grow in number and significance,” Jones-Brown said.

In a Dayton Daily News 2001 study, Cincinnati was second only to Minneapolis in the number of people shot. Minneapolis police shot 29 people between 1995 and 2001, resulting in the deaths of 12 individuals. In Cincinnati police shot 22 people during the same time period, 13 resulting in fatalities. Another two died after they were sprayed with chemical agents while being attacked by the cops. (Common Dreams, April 28, 2001)

Economic crisis, repression at home and abroad

The use of state repression to control, contain and exploit oppressed and working people is an international problem. In February and March, the workers of Guadeloupe and Martinique in the French-controlled Caribbean launched a general strike against the impact of the global economic crisis and the racist-colonial control of their islands.

In Guadeloupe, strike supporter Jacques Bino was killed during a confrontation between the French police and striking unionists and youth. The French took no action against the police involved in this incident.

Police repression against the strike prompted rebellions in both Martinique and Guadeloupe in February and March. As a result of the discipline of the workers and their organizations, the strike demands were largely met by the French colonial authorities. The presence of riot police, however, illustrated clearly that law-enforcement agencies within a capitalist and colonial society serve the interests of the ruling classes.

A recent report issued by the Center for American Progress entitled “Weathering the Storm: Black Men in the Recession” points out: “March was one of the worst months for layoffs on record. The current recession has been particularly difficult for the manufacturing and construction industries—two industries in which black men are disproportionately employed. Many workplaces have also implemented hiring freezes, a more important and less acknowledged contribution to sharply rising rates of unemployment.

“Black men’s unemployment rate of 15.4 percent in March 2009 was more than twice that of white men and up almost seven percentage points from a year earlier. One recent study called African Americans’ economic situation ‘a silent economic depression,’ in which soaring levels of unemployment impose significant social costs on black families and entire communities.” (www.americanprogress.org)

As a result of this growing crisis, it is not surprising that police repression and terrorism will escalate against working people in general and the oppressed national groups in particular. The growing levels of state violence can only be counteracted through mass organization and mobilization.

Read this entire article at www.workers.org.



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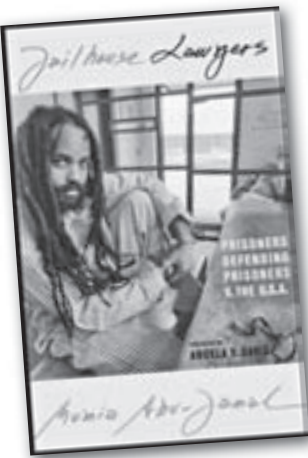
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Mumia’s book pays tribute to jailhouse lawyers



To commemorate the 55th birthday of African-American political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal, local meetings were held around the country to help publicize the recent release of his sixth book, “Jailhouse Lawyers—Prisoners Defending Prisoners v. the U.S.A.” Former prisoners spoke at these meetings on the major contribution Mumia’s book makes in paying tribute to prisoners who learn the law in order to represent themselves and other prisoners who are denied access to the best attorneys. Right, Pam Africa, from International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, spoke before an overflowing crowd on April 25 at Riverside Church in Harlem, N.Y., on the importance of organizing in the streets to win Mumia’s freedom from Pennsylvania’s death row. WW will report more on these events in an upcoming issue.

—Report and photo by Monica Moorehead



Another racist killing

Latina community activist shot in the back by cops

By John Santos

People of color have been all too aware of police brutality in our neighborhoods. We have all too often seen police used as an occupying force to terrorize communities of color.



Yet another example is the killing of Annette Garcia, who on the evening of Jan. 21 was shot in the back by police in Riverside, Calif. The police were responding to a domestic violence call in the Garcia home. The shooting happened in front of Garcia’s spouse and three children, who were forced to watch helplessly while she bled to death.

Garcia was a member of the Watsonville

Brown Berets, a Chicano activist group that organizes the neighborhood to fight against police brutality, end gang violence, serve the community and protect the Chicano community. The Brown Berets are one of a number of groups that are fighting back against police brutality and the repression of people of color.

Witnesses say that the deputy shot Garcia from a block away, while she was walking away, and that she did not present a threat to anyone. The first five shots missed before she was killed by the sixth bullet, which struck her in the back. It took more than an hour for an ambulance to arrive at the scene. She was taken to Riverside County Regional Center where

she was pronounced dead upon arrival.

The Riverside County Sheriff’s Department is refusing to release any information on the killing—including the name of the killer cop—but has placed the shooter on a paid administrative leave of absence. Many Riverside county citizens say that this decision is tantamount to rewarding the errant deputy with a paid vacation, and are asking for the resignation of the Board of Supervisors appointed Sheriff-Coroner Stanley Sniff. Riverside County sheriffs have had a long history of abuse and officer-involved shootings.

Approximately 38 percent of Riverside County’s residents are Latina/o and many of its residents face a constant barrage of police brutality, anti-immigrant policies

and threats of raids, such that heinous acts like Garcia’s killing are not uncommon.

On Jan. 26 more than 100 outraged community residents took to the streets in a candlelight vigil/protest demanding justice for Garcia and other victims of racist killings such as Sean Bell and Oscar Grant. Signs linked these victims and other struggles together. After the candlelight vigil, protesters marched to the Riverside sheriff’s office. The event was called by Garcia’s brothers and sisters in the Brown Berets.

The killing of Annette Garcia is another in a long line of reasons why we must organize together and fight back—not only against racist killer cops, but also against a racist system that encourages police brutality. □

Rev. Prof. Luis Barrios abused in solitary confinement

By Dee Knight
New York

Revolutionary priest and professor Luis Barrios has been subjected to abuse and solitary confinement at Manhattan Correction Center since March 9. The Rev. Barrios is serving a 60-day sentence there for “trespassing on government property” during a protest last fall at the School of the Americas, located at Fort Benning, Ga. Renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in 2001, the SOA teaches assassination and torture tactics in order to advance U.S. imperialism’s interests in Latin America.

For nine days, Barrios was held in a 10-by-6-foot cell for 23 hours each day. On the fourth day he became ill, complaining of severe kidney pain, vomiting, fever and headache. After 12 hours he was taken to an emergency room.

Going to and from the hospital, shackled from head to foot, Barrios was subjected to repeated body and cavity searches. He has been denied access to writing materials, telephone use, attendance at Sunday worship, heat in his cell, visits from loved ones and friends, and contact with his lawyer.

Minerva Mella, the reverend’s spouse, told Workers World that Barrios plans to publicize his experience and observations about the treatment of prisoners upon his release. Barrios told Mella that the executive warden’s assistant came to his

cell “upset” about a letter from the president of John Jay College, where Barrios teaches, complaining about the abuses. “Luis told the assistant warden the content of that letter was completely accurate and he refused to sign a piece of paper that the warden wanted him to sign,” she reported.

Manolo De Los Santos told Workers World that his father’s revolutionary spirit remains high, despite the abuse and isolation. He thanked supporters who gather in front of the prison every Thursday from 5 to 7 p.m. at 150 Park Row, near City Hall.

A colleague of Barrios at John Jay College, professor David Brotherton, reported that Barrios was referred to a prison psychologist while in solitary confinement for “smiling a lot.” He said they couldn’t understand why he always smiled at the correction officers and refused to have his spirit broken. In an article in the British Guardian, Dr. Brotherton states: “In one of Luis’s most recent letters from prison, he writes: ‘Under these circumstances with my dear brother inmates I remain highly motivated. My spirit is still looking for peace with justice. Sometimes I think this system has but one goal: to dehumanise and break you. Believe me, this is not going to happen. I’m a person of faith, vision and action. I came in here with my dignity and although I’ll be going out differently my commitment to social justice remains intact.’” (April 16) □

Government goes on trial for Katrina flooding

By Brenda Ryan

Survivors of Hurricane Katrina are finally getting their day in court. In a trial currently under way in New Orleans, a group of residents is holding the Army Corps of Engineers responsible for the flooding that occurred in the wake of Katrina.

They say the Corps failed to properly build and maintain the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet, a channel opened in 1963 to provide a shorter route for ships between New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. As a result of these MR-GO failings, problems with the waterway caused environmental damage that allowed water to break through the levees.

A report released two years ago found the agency culpable for the flooding that occurred when Katrina hit in 2005. The New Orleans Times-Picayune reported in March 2007 that an investigative team, including Louisiana State University engineering and storm researchers, concluded that the Army Corps of Engineers had knowingly built levees and floodwalls lower than mandated by Congress, failed to detect or ignored errors, and failed to properly maintain the system.

The residents filed suit in 2006 to recover damages caused by the flooding. The United States sought to get the case thrown out or, alternatively, a ruling in its favor. It argued that the plans for MR-GO excluded surge barriers and bank protections and that adding them would not have promoted the purpose of MR-GO,

which was to provide an aid to navigation. The government also contended that “the addition of these features would have invalidated the cost-benefit calculations that were an essential underpinning” of the recommendation for authorization of the channel’s construction.

But in a March 20 ruling, U.S. District Judge Stanwood Duval Jr. denied the government’s request. He said the plaintiffs “demonstrated that there are material questions of fact that the Corps itself had found that the environmental damage caused by the maintenance and operation of the MRGO was significant, such that it had no choice but to file the appropriate mandated reports.”

The trial offers a chance for a sliver of justice for the survivors of Katrina. Not only did they face racist neglect by local and federal officials and agencies after the hurricane, but vigilantes and cops killed many Black residents of New Orleans. In August a judge dismissed on technicalities charges against six police officers in the killing of two unarmed survivors who were trying to cross the Danziger Bridge in New Orleans to reach a grocery store. And in December The Nation magazine published an investigation of racist violence, “Katrina’s Hidden Race War,” which found that bands of whites shot and killed a reported 11 Black men.

Only the continued struggle of the people of New Orleans and their supporters will bring justice for the genocidal actions of the government and other racists. □

Women improve access to birth control

By Kathy Durkin

Another success has been achieved in the campaign to make emergency contraceptive (EC) available to all women who need it.

On April 22, the Food and Drug Administration, adhering to a court mandate, negated a prior Bush administration policy. The FDA agreed to expand availability of nonprescription “morning-after” contraceptive pills to 17-year-olds. This lowers it from the 18-year-old requirement, which was itself a concession wrested from the FDA in 2006.

On March 23, U.S. District Court Judge Edward R. Korman ruled that nonprescription EC must be made accessible to all 17-year-olds within 30 days of his decision and that the FDA should assess lifting all age restrictions. He said “former FDA officials” had used “political considerations, delays and implausible justifications, to hold up over-the-counter sale of the birth control drug.” He cited “pressure emanating from the [Bush] White House.” (findlaw.com)

This victory reflects the strong organizing by reproductive rights, women’s and civil liberties organizations that have fought hard for years against the ultraright to win FDA approval of widely accessible, emergency birth control. This history is rife with struggle that included organized demonstrations, petitions, phone and e-mail campaigns, and lawsuits.

The struggle began in 2001, when the Association of Reproductive Health Professions and 65 other organizations petitioned the FDA to make EC nationally accessible without age limits.

The FDA stalled and then refused to do so in 2004 and 2006, despite its own scientists’ advice and expert panels’ votes

for unrestricted EC availability for women of all ages. The agency violated its own internal procedures, in collusion with the insidious right wing in and out of the FDA (and in the White House!), which was pursuing an anti-birth-control agenda and sought to curtail women’s rights.

In 2006, after enormous legal and mass pressure, when congressional members even refused to approve a new FDA chief, the agency agreed that women of 18 and over could obtain nonprescription EC at drugstores. But as a concession to the ultraright, the FDA refused to extend this medical right to younger women. Pro-choice groups hailed the decision, but they saw it as only a partial victory, as it discriminated against youth.

The recent court decision was in the case of Timmino v. von Eschenbach—the FDA chief—that the Center for Reproductive Rights filed in 2005. It called for “unrestricted over-the-counter access [to EC] for all women.” Plaintiffs included the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals, the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, activists in the Morning-After Pill Conspiracy, parents and CRR itself. The Center for Constitutional Rights also represents some of the plaintiffs in this lawsuit.

The CRR charged the FDA with violating women’s rights to privacy and equal protection, and with discriminating against women. The suit cited internal FDA memos supporting over-the-counter EC for women of all ages. (ccrjustice.org)

Pro-choice, legal and medical organizations hailed the recent court decision as a nationwide victory for women, and for reproductive rights and contraceptive access, which also sends a message that medical decisions must be based on science, not right-wing ideology.

Annie Tummino, lead plaintiff and Morning-After Pill Conspiracy Coalition coordinator, who got arrested in this struggle for “Plan B” (EC’s brand name), said, “We are thrilled that immediate access to the Morning-After Pill will be expanded for younger women and that the FDA will have to reconsider whether Plan B should be approved without any restrictions.” (mapconspiracy.org)

The U.S. has the highest rate of youth pregnancy among industrialized countries. One in three women under 20 becomes pregnant; 80 percent of these pregnancies are unplanned. (New York Times, April 22) Easy and quick availability of EC without prescription requirements is crucial. To be effective in preventing pregnancy, this strong dose of birth control pills must be taken within 72 hours of sexual relations. Pro-choice activists say that EC decreases unplanned pregnancies and abortions.

Age limitations for this medication end up discriminating against not only young women, but also those from nationally oppressed communities, low-income families and those in rural areas. When pharmacies keep EC behind counters and require identification to purchase it, or harass women, it is intimidating.

EC should be available to women of all ages—on demand—with no restrictions or obstacles, in every drugstore and health care facility. It’s a basic health care right.

Erin Mahoney, another plaintiff in the Timmino lawsuit, stressed: “In the streets and in court, women have been fighting for unrestricted access to the morning-after pill for years. We will keep fighting until the FDA does the right thing and allows all women to have access to [it] without any restrictions.” (mapconspiracy.org) □

ON THE

AT&T workers fighting back

AT&T issued its first quarter earnings report on April 22. Despite the bad economy the company showed a profit of \$3.3 billion. Yet AT&T, which is leading all competitors in its field, has the greedy arrogance to demand that the 100,000 workers whose contracts expired on April 4 should make do with measly wage increases, pay much more for health care, and receive lower pension benefits. The workers, who have been mobilizing for a strike in workplaces from coast to coast, will have none of it. In fact hundreds of members of the Communications Workers union trekked to Dallas to picket AT&T’s April 24 shareholders’ meeting. Their leaflet exposed AT&T’s blatant class warfare: It showed the corporation trying to cut the workers’ standard of living while the bosses and shareholders live high on the hog. (AT&T had record profits of \$12.9 billion in 2008!) It’s time for AT&T to stop the attack and fork over the wealth to those who created it!

SAG to vote on new contract

After a year of on-again, off-again negotiations—and much internal rancor and debate—the Screen Actors Guild’s national board voted narrowly to approve the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers’ latest offer on April 19. Though its members have lost millions of dollars by not working over the last year and the 10 percent wage increases over the next two years are essentially the same as those they voted down last June, the new contract does fulfill a primary SAG objective: for the first time it includes provisions for

Racist unemployment patterns exposed in ‘job sprawl’ study

By Martha Grevatt

In a Brookings Institute study released April 6, Detroit topped the list of urban areas suffering from “job sprawl.” In the Detroit metropolitan region, encompassing the area within a 35-mile radius drawn from the city’s center, more than 77 percent of the jobs are located at least 10 miles away. Only 7 percent of the jobs are within three miles of the core.

Not only in Detroit but in all of the 98 largest urban areas studied, the “job sprawl” trend is leading to greater impoverishment in the cities and a huge income and employment gap between white workers and workers of color.

The study doesn’t come out and call this racism, but in overly polite language the facts are laid out: “When overlaid onto existing patterns of residential segregation, employment decentralization can result in different levels of geographic access to employment opportunities for different demographic groups. ... Metro areas with higher rates of employment decentralization exhibit greater rates of ‘spatial mismatch’ between the relative locations of jobs and black residents. ... Even as low-income and minority populations suburbanize, job growth is fastest in higher-income suburbs, perpetuating patterns of spatial mismatch within suburbia.” (www.brookings.edu)

In 95 out of 98 metropolitan areas studied, jobs increased outside the 10-mile radius by an average of 17 percent from

1998 to 2006. Yet within the three-mile radius, the increase was only 1 percent. “At just over 45 percent, the outer ring contains the largest share of metro area jobs and more than twice the proportion located in the inner ring,” the study found.

Out of 18 industries studied, 17 experienced “employment decentralization” in the eight-year period. In the manufacturing industry, 53.7 percent of the jobs were located outside the 10-mile radius. Only the industrial category “Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Agriculture Support” had a lower rate of inner-city employment.

During the eight-year period covered by the study, cities with a large industrial economy—not only Detroit but Cleveland, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Cincinnati and others—experienced “rapid decentralization.” The Plain Dealer pointed out that, in Cleveland, suburban factory jobs are inaccessible by public transportation or require commutes as high as two hours.

The movement of jobs away from the most oppressed neighborhoods has actually been going on for decades. In 1957 Chrysler opened a stamping plant in Twinsburg, Ohio—then a rural town halfway between Cleveland and Akron, Ohio. When an older plant in Detroit closed and the work was being shipped out, Black and white workers sat down in front of the trucks and won the right to transfer to Twinsburg.

At that time Chrysler was the largest

private employer in the city of Detroit. By the 1980s every factory inside city limits had been closed. While in 1991 Chrysler began building new plants in the city, more of the company’s facilities remain in suburban locations. General Motors has only one plant in Detroit and Ford has none.

Detroit’s population is 82 percent African American compared to 3 percent in Warren, Mich., and 1 percent in Sterling Heights, Mich., where Chrysler and GM have several plants. Ford is based in Dearborn, Mich., where the Black population is also just 1 percent.

In 1983 Cleveland lost both the White Motor plant and the GM Fisher Body plant. “[Fisher] was known as the Coit Road plant,” political prisoner Mosi Paki recently wrote. “It was very productive and essential to the area, yet it was closed; but the Chevy plant on Brook Park, [Ohio, then] a poor producing plant, is still open.” Paki’s mother was one of the 1,700 workers to lose their jobs.

The Parma, Ohio, Chevrolet plant is now a GM stamping plant. In 1983 the city of Parma was almost exclusively white and notoriously racist. “One can only conclude,” Paki adds, “the 50 percent Black and white workers, their strong union and a predominant Black neighborhood that benefited from the workers’ commerce were the real underlying reasons to close the Coit Road plant. Many of my Mom’s co-workers, Black and white, were good people, whose union represented them

in strength, and they were hardworking parents.”

Paki himself experienced these hard economic times. He writes to us from the Ohio State Penitentiary, where he is serving a life term on trumped-up charges stemming from a 1993 Lucasville prison uprising.

Collinwood, the neighborhood surrounding the Coit Road plant in Cleveland, also witnessed the closing of National Acme, TRW, Premier Electric, General Electric, Parker-Hannifin and a number of small machine shops. At the time of the 2000 census, the largest number of households profiled made less than \$10,000 a year. Now one in 20 homes in Collinwood is boarded up. A number of youths in the neighborhood have been killed by police in recent years.

The racist bosses in the auto, steel, rubber, machine tool and appliance industries sucked billions of dollars in profits out of their urban plants—only to shutter them and build modern plants in the suburbs, in right-to-work states and in low-wage countries.

What the study doesn’t look at is the millions of industrial jobs wiped out by greedy corporations in the cities and suburbs alike. Workers of color and white workers have all lost good-paying union jobs.

Only a class-wide movement, of a thoroughly anti-racist character, can begin to reverse the devastating impact of decades of capitalist restructuring.

E-mail: mgrevatt@workers.org

PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

payment for work created for and transmitted over the Internet. SAG's 120,000 members will vote on the contract in May. It will last through June 2011. That expiration date offers huge potential. It's the same date on which other contracts will expire in other areas of the motion picture and television industry. In unity there is strength!

May Day work stoppage in Puerto Rico.

Five major public sector unions in Puerto Rico (including the Federation of Puerto Rican Teachers) have called for an all-out work stoppage on the island on May Day. The unions are protesting the fact that by passing Law 7 the colonial government has suspended all public sector labor contracts for two years, nullifying all contractual rights and negotiated wage increases. Along with this repressive law loom layoffs, expected to total 30,000 to 60,000 workers over the next few years. "These fascist and draconian measures will have a severe impact on the dire conditions already facing the Puerto Rican working class. Working class solidarity is needed," writes Ángel González, FMPR Support Committee. (e-mail, April 20)

Commemorate workers on April 28

Not only is April 28 Workers Memorial Day, when workers remember the hundreds of men and women who are needlessly killed every year on the job due to the bosses' greed and mismanagement; April 28 is also Equal Pay Day, when women demand to be paid fairly for their labor. Look for activities commemorating both in your area.

New unemployment resource

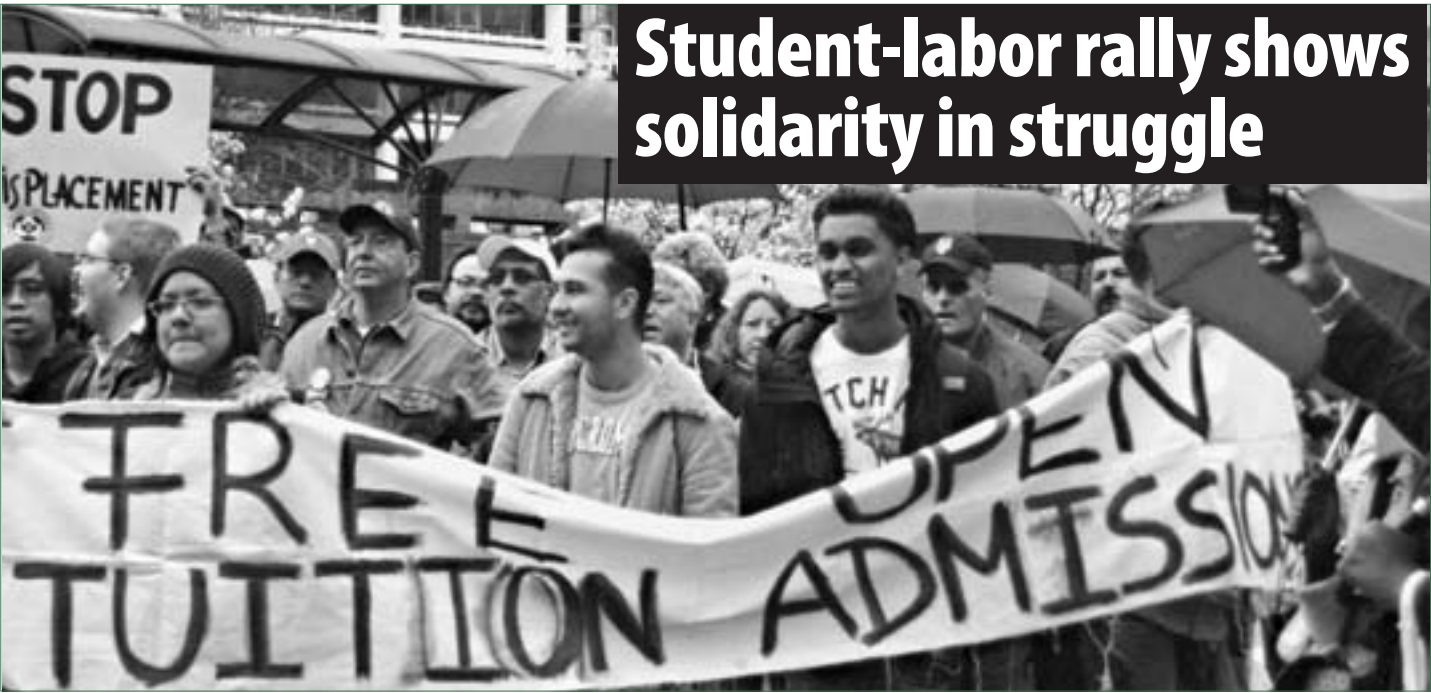
The AFL-CIO has just created a new Web site to help workers coping with layoffs and seeking jobs. Though it's still in formation, check out www.unemploymentlifeline.org.

Stella D'Oro strike support

On April 16, six women took the message "Boycott Stella D'Oro! Stop attacks on unions, wages, and benefits!" to grocery shoppers in their Chelsea (Manhattan) neighborhood. The six, who are active in many unions, handed out leaflets and stickers. They supported Bakery Local 50's strike (now over eight months long) against the bosses' attempts to defeat the union, first with horrific contract "offers," and now with temporary scab labor at the historic Bronx bakery. One activist convinced a small store's owner not to order any more of the Italian-style biscuits and breadsticks for one month.

In other developments, a fundraiser held in Harlem on April 4 featured progressive artists from many genres. It collected over \$4,000 for the strikers' cause. The union's unfair labor practices case against Stella D'Oro and Brynwood Partners will be heard by a National Labor Relations Board judge in May. The union asks supporters to call Board member Henrik Hartong III at 203-972-8082 or e-mail hhartong@brynwoodpartners.com and tell him to negotiate a fair contract now. Download leaflets at www.stelladorostrike2008.com using Adobe Acrobat. Several videos of strike rallies are available on YouTube.

~ Sara Catalinotto



WW PHOTO LEILANI DOWELL

Hundreds of City College of New York students and faculty supporters walked out in protest of a \$300-per-semester tuition hike and faculty cutbacks on April 22. The CCNY protest was lively and linked the struggle for student rights with solidarity for striking Stella D'oro workers from Bakery,

Confectionary, Tobacco Local 50 in the Bronx.

The April 22 walkout was called in the spirit of the historic 1969 Open Admissions Strike against CCNY's racist admissions practices.

—David Hoskins

Teachers support Stella D'Oro strike

The following excerpted resolution in support of striking Stella D'Oro workers was passed by the New York State United Teachers on April 4. NYSUT organized a busload of 50 teachers from Westchester, N.Y., to join the picket lines and present a \$2,500 check for the Stella D'Oro strike fund on April 27.

Whereas, NYSUT members, their families and their students are experiencing the real effects of economic recession in this state, with teacher locals facing the threat or the reality of layoffs; and

Whereas, State AFL-CIO President Denis Hughes [called] for an end to "the distinction between public and private because it's what we can do together that makes a difference," and further observed, "These are historically bad times and they demand a historic push-back"; and

Whereas, the eight-month-long strike of a small local of bakers in New York City offers an opportunity to build toward that "historic push-back"; and

Whereas, the 135 members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union Local 50 have been on strike for more than

eight months—and in eight months, not one union member has crossed the picket line; and

Whereas, the strikers are working-class people in the Bronx, New York City, largely people of color, immigrants, and including many who are parents of children in New York City public schools and of students in [City University of New York]; and

Whereas, when the union contract for the Stella D'Oro workers expired in the summer of 2008, the new owners, private equity company Brynwood Partners, demanded huge concessions—such as a reduction in wages every year of the contract, the elimination of all holidays, vacation days and sick days; and

Whereas, on August 13, the members of BCTGW Local 50 went on strike in response to the new owner's demands and their refusal to engage in good faith bargaining; and

Whereas, the Stella D'Oro strike is gaining wide support within the New York City labor movement: the [Professional Staff Congress] and the [United Federation of Teachers] have passed resolutions of support and made contributions, as have

other NYC unions and the New York City Central Labor Council; and

Whereas, Local 50 of BCTGW has called on its supporters to boycott all Stella D'Oro products (one of the strikers' chants is "No contract, no cookies!"); and

Whereas, members of Local 50 have reciprocated by supporting public-sector unions, joining thousands of public-sector employees for the March 5 demonstration at City Hall in New York and participating in other actions to save State funding for public education; and

Whereas, labor resistance to concessions anywhere strengthens labor's resistance to concessions everywhere; therefore be it

Resolved, that as NYSUT responds to the immediate needs of its own members facing the effects of the current recession, NYSUT also support the Stella D'Oro strike by publicizing it in New York Teacher and calling on NYSUT's membership to join the boycott of Stella D'Oro products until the strike is over; and be it further

Resolved, that the NYSUT Board of Directors be encouraged to make a contribution to the strike fund of BCTGM Local 50. □

Activists to convene at economic 'ground zero'

All out for People's Summit in Detroit

By Workers World Detroit bureau

Organizing for the June 14-17 People's Summit and Tent City in Detroit is building fast. A planning meeting April 25 was attended by representatives from a broad base of progressive organizations. They included the Autoworkers Caravan, which has been in the forefront of challenging the massive attacks on auto workers' wages and benefits; the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions; disabled activists from Warriors on Wheels; Call 'Em Out; the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization; the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality; and the National Lawyers Guild. Two UAW members from Toledo, Ohio, also attended.

The People's Summit in Grand Circus Park will be an opportunity to link the struggles challenging the war on poor and working people, and to put forward a program for jobs, universal health care and a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions, as well as full rights for oppressed nationalities, immigrants, people with disabilities, women and the lesbian/gay/bi and trans communities.

Segments of the summit will be devoted to demonstrations targeting specific struggles such as the massive threats on auto workers. There will be a moratorium on evictions during the People's Summit as organizers will participate in flying squadrons to aid individuals facing the hated dumpsters and bailiff evictions.

The People's Summit is a direct challenge to the convening of big-business representatives at the National Business Summit scheduled for June 15-17. That event has been moved from Ford Field to the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center due to lower than expected registrations. More than 40 executives have agreed to speak at this gathering, which is to be co-chaired by Ford Motor Company executive head Bill Ford and Dow Chemical chief executive Andrew Liveris. Other participants will include corporate representatives from Conoco-Phillips, General Motors, Chrysler, Humana, Inc., and the presidents of the National Council of Competitiveness, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers.

Exciting developments were announced

at the April 25 meeting, including the posting of a new video promoting the People's Summit on YouTube. Participants discussed logistics and other components of making the four-day event a success. Organizers are out leafleting progressive events leading up to the summit, including May Day activities in Detroit.

The People's Summit is receiving a solid response nationally from activist organizers who see Detroit as "ground zero" or the "Katrina" of the economic collapse. The call for the summit is posted on numerous progressive list serves and Web sites. The national Bail Out the People Movement and the National Poor People's Economic and Human Rights Campaign are among a growing list of endorsers.

Donations for the People's Summit are being solicited. Checks or money orders payable to the Moratorium NOW! Coalition/People's Summit can be sent to 5920 Second Avenue, Detroit, MI 48202. The next organizing meeting will be held on May 9 at 2 p.m. at 2727 Second Ave. in Detroit. Call 313-887-4344 or visit www.moratorium-mi.org for more information. □

Professional immigrant-bashing shut down at public university

By Yolanda Carrington, Scott Williams and Ben Carroll
Chapel Hill, N.C.

On April 14, right-wing racist and anti-immigrant bigot Tom Tancredo came to the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill to speak at a forum hosted by the newly formed Youth for Western Civilization. The ex-Colorado congressperson is on a countrywide tour of college campuses, bringing his message of anti-immigrant hysteria to students across the country. The YWC is a right-wing, anti-immigrant organization that has been identified as a white supremacist hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

While Tancredo's racist speeches have been challenged by students before, nothing in the ex-congressperson's career could have prepared him for the fiercely loud and principled stand taken by UNC students on April 14. More than 300 protesters from various student organizations showed up at Bingham Hall to give a strong denunciation of Tancredo, YWC and everything that these xenophobic reactionaries stand for.

Around 100 protesters converged outside the event shortly before it began, chanting, "Racist, sexist, anti-gay! Right-wing bigots go away!" Within minutes the police attacked the demonstration, throwing several protesters to the ground, pepper-spraying nearly a dozen students, and threatening people with Taser guns. Less than five minutes into Tancredo's white supremacist diatribe, the overwhelming opposition to Tancredo and the YWC led to the event being shut down.

The response to the protest by the corporate media and university administrators has been libelous and one-sided. The Raleigh News and Observer published an editorial in which it condemned the students for "silencing" Tancredo and violating his "right" to free speech, comparing



'Hate speech is not free speech,' 'solidarity with all immigrants' was the protesters' message.

the students' principled action to North Carolina's McCarthy-era "Speaker Ban" law that barred communist sympathizers and other "subversives" from speaking at any UNC system campus. UNC System President Erskine Bowles, UNC-CH Chancellor Holden Thorp and UNC Board of Trustees Chairman Roger Perry all officially telephoned the hate-mongering Tancredo to apologize. Both administrators and corporate media outlets have unquestionably supported the police terrorizing and demonizing of student activists.

The role of the media and the business leaders of public institutions in a capitalist society is to delegitimize protests against the ruling class. Under capitalist society, universities exist to reproduce a particular set of social relations, and treat "free speech" as an abstract concept. What is missed by any debate in this context is the very real implications. Tancredo is not simply traveling around to engage in intellectual debates. He is an organizer attempting to consolidate a movement. He provides political support to right-wing Minutemen militia, Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids and U.S. policies of deportation, concentration camp-like detention centers, and a whole system that rakes in superprofits from the 12 million people working in this country without rights.



Students at UNC have pushed hate speech off campus before. In 1975 David Duke, then a national leader of the Ku Klux Klan, was shouted down and scared off the stage by a group of about 200 Black students. He had been invited to speak but was drowned out by shouts of "Power to the people!" The incident sparked a fierce debate about "free speech" on campus. Then-Chancellor Ferebee Taylor called Duke being chased off campus "a transgression of one of the highest and noblest traditions of this institution." A review of the articles in the campus newspaper from the days and weeks following the Duke visit is strikingly similar to the climate after Tancredo's speech.

Following the Tancredo speech, the YWC had the audacity to invite yet another right-wing bigot to campus the next week—former Virginia representative Virgil Goode, who promotes the same anti-immigrant scapegoating and racism as Tancredo. University administrators and police went out of their way to accommodate and protect Goode against attempts by protesters to speak against his message of hate and racism.

Outraged by the presence of another right-wing political figure on campus, a coalition of groups organized a separate forum and speak-out against racism, near where Goode was speaking. Other

community members decided to go into the event to protest. Six were arrested on the spot for booing and holding signs denouncing Goode's message.

The arrests come during an intense campaign of repression that is being carried out by university administrators and campus police in the aftermath of the Tancredo demonstration. Campus police have been harassing student activists, showing up outside of classrooms and trying to interrogate people involved in the demonstrations. Nine days after the Tancredo protests, police arrested one student on charges of "disturbing the peace in an educational institution," a baseless, trumped up charge.

Students and community members are speaking out against police harassment and intimidation of activists. Protesters involved in both demonstrations, along with other student and community supporters, have formed the UNC Protesters Defense Committee to push back against police and university repression. The Defense Committee is calling for all charges to be dropped against the seven who have been charged in connection with both demonstrations; the formation of a permanent, independent board comprised of students, workers and faculty to investigate the recent actions of the campus police and any actions in the future; and an immediate end to the campaign of repression against student activists.

During this time of economic crisis, it is more important than ever to speak out against the racism of Tancredo and the YWC, who are attempting to scapegoat immigrants for the current crisis and whose white supremacist ideology presents a reactionary danger to all working people. With support flowing in from around the country, students are emboldened now more than ever to continue to wage this struggle against racism and police repression. □

Mother's Day delegation to meet with immigrant detainees

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

Georgia Detention Watch members are in the final stages of planning a second solidarity visit to women detainees held in the Etowah Detention Center in Gadsden, Ala., on May 9.

Organizers chose the Mother's Day weekend to highlight the cruel separation of families caused by the immigration policies carried out by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

At any given time, between 120 and 150 immigrant women are jailed at the facility in northern Alabama, pending deportation in most cases. Many have lived and worked in this country for years, and have U.S.-born children. It is not unusual for the father of their children to also be held in detention in preparation for deportation.

Although most of the women originated from Spanish-speaking countries, women from Africa, Southeast Asia, Europe, the Caribbean and elsewhere are also held there. They suffer in common from a lack of legal counsel, language translation, isolation from family and friends, and anxiety about their future.

According to a recent Pew Hispanic Center study, there are an estimated 4 million U.S.-born children who live in families with an undocumented parent. The practice of workplace raids, immigration

sweeps in neighborhoods, racial profiling and the implementation of 287(g) agreements that authorize local police to enforce immigration law has created a crisis for thousands of children whose parents "disappear" while they are at school.

"The grossly commercial aspects of Mother's Day—spending money to buy flowers and cards—mocks the deeply felt sentiments certainly many people have, especially in marginalized communities, for the vital role mothers play in maintaining their families," said America Gruner, a leader of Georgia Detention Watch. "Our goal in making this visit is to express our solidarity with them, to let them know that we are working to change these inhuman policies."

As part of the group's first visit on March 7 for International Women's Day, Operation Panty was launched. The only underwear available to the women detainees is an orange-mesh boxer that is uncomfortable and unsuitable for women's personal hygiene needs. Hundreds of pairs of cotton briefs, contributed in response to the appeal, were distributed by the IWD delegation in March.

The members of the Mother's Day solidarity visit will also bring with them underwear and other personal items to reduce the indignities of the women's detention.

For more information, go to www.gadetentionwatch.org. □



Delegation visits immigrant women detainees in Alabama on International Women's Day, March 8.

PHOTO: MARY BABINGTON

Alert: Texas detainees on hunger strike

An estimated 200 immigrant detainees at the Port Isabel Detention Center in Los Fresnos, Texas, are staging a hunger strike to protest physical and verbal abuse by guards, a lack of medical care and legal assistance, unsanitary living conditions and other violations of due process.

The action began on April 22. The facility, operated by Ahtna Technical Services Inc., holds about 1,200 male and female detainees. Some have been there for six or more months with no information about the status of their cases. In 2008, the Texas Civil Rights Review reported that four female detainees suffered mis-

carriages due to lack of adequate medical care there. The facility has been cited for a rat infestation.

On April 29, the Southwest Workers Union and other community groups will hold a fast and rally in front of the center. Calling on the authorities to stop these abuses, they demand the right to visit the detainees to determine their well-being.

Letters can be sent to: Field Office Director Michael J. Pitts, Port Isabel Detention Center, 27991 Buena Vista Blvd., Los Fresnos, TX 78566. For more information, call 956-207-9459.

—Dianne Mathiowetz

After tragedy strikes again

Power 4 the People launches ‘SAVE-A-LIFE’ campaign

By Sharon Black
Baltimore

Another tragedy has occurred in Baltimore as a result of a utility shut-off. The community has once again felt the pain and loss from another house fire. This fire has taken the life of a 7-year-old girl and her grandmother in East Baltimore. The blaze resulted from candle use after the family’s gas and electricity had been shut off. Similar to Betty Godfrey, a 61-year-old woman in West Baltimore who lost her life to a house fire, their utilities were off for close to a year.

In one month alone three people have died. This has taken place right after Baltimore Gas and Electric announced that approximately 84,000 households in Maryland are slated to have utilities cut off. This crisis is a result of the state having the highest utility rates in the country and the continuing economic crisis, which has left many workers without jobs.

Power 4 the People, a project of the Bail Out the People Movement in Baltimore, has initiated a campaign for a moratorium on utility shut-offs. Activists are demanding a people’s investigation into the health and safety impact of utility shut-offs; debt

cancellation for unemployed workers, those hit the hardest by the economic crisis and those most vulnerable to excessive high rates including seniors, people with health problems and young children; and a roll back in gas and electric rates for individuals and small businesses.

In response to the recent deaths, the group has stepped up its efforts with an additional campaign called “Save-a-Life,” which has launched door-to-door canvassing in the community informing people of their rights, distributing brochures and collecting petitions, and offering battery-powered lighting to any individual without electricity.

At a press conference widely covered by television media, Renee Washington, a community volunteer with Power 4 the People, announced, “We are calling on churches, unions and community groups to reach out to their fellow neighbors and co-workers and become ‘Save-a-Life’ centers by collecting battery-powered lights and fixtures to distribute to those who have lost their power.”

Washington was defiant as she proclaimed: “We need to stop the shut-offs! But until we can accomplish that, it’s critical for all of us to go into our neighborhoods and com-



WW PHOTO: SHARON BLACK

Power 4 the People activists display battery-powered lights and fixtures that they will distribute to those without electricity.

munities and canvass each block to make sure everyone is as safe as possible. We need to especially protect our seniors and young children. The shut-offs are criminal and BGE needs to be held liable.”

Lydia Stokes, a former meter reader, also spoke at the press conference. She offered to read anyone’s meter by contacting her through the Power 4 the People office. The group will begin free counseling on people’s rights every Thursday from 6 to 9 p.m. at its office at 2011 N. Charles St. (lower level) and help people

wade through the system.

Power 4 the People is building a statewide campaign to stop utility shut-offs and roll back rates. The group will also present a letter to officials requesting that the main Maryland Energy Assistance Program center remain open at least one to two nights of the week to assist workers who cannot apply during working hours. The state and city need to fund more jobs to help reduce long waits and accommodate the larger numbers of BGE customers facing shut-offs. □

Boston activists fight racist school plan

By Frank Neisser
Boston

A new coalition of parents, teachers, students and community activists has come together in Boston to defend the right to equal, quality education for the city’s African-American, Latino/a and Asian communities. The Coalition for Equal, Quality Education came together in response to plans by the school department to change Boston’s student assignment plan in a way that would reduce community access to the best educational resources.

The measure, which would increase the number of transportation zones in the city from three large zones to five smaller ones, was proposed as part of the school department’s money-slashing 2009 budget proposal.

Because of strong community opposition during hearings on the budget, this part of the proposal was stripped out when the School Committee voted on it at the end of March. The superintendent is scheduled to present a revised version of the plan to the School Committee on April 29, and hold hearings on it leading up to a vote on June 24, after school is closed for the year.

The coalition is calling on students, parents, teachers and community activists to come together in a Community Summit on May 14 at Roxbury Community College Student Center to find out the facts and to plan mass action to stop the racist plan.

Coalition activists are distributing leaflets to inform the community that the school department’s proposed student assignment plan will result in resegregating the schools and promoting inequality. It points out the plan’s effects will include limited school choices for parents and students; decreased access to high-performing schools in Roxbury, Mattapan and Dorchester; and denial of access to specific cultural programs critical to

students’ needs. English language programs and special education services will continue to be underserved, along with decreased opportunities to eliminate the “Achievement/Opportunity Gap.”

The new Coalition for Equal, Quality Education includes the Black Educators’ Alliance of Massachusetts; Work-4-Quality Schools, Fight-4-Equity; United Steel Workers Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Union; Boston City Councilors Chuck Turner, Charles Yancey and Sam Yoon; New England Human Rights for Haiti; Community Change; Union of Minority Neighborhoods; Minister Don Mohammed; Bishop Filipe Teixeira OFSJC; Women’s Fightback Network; Bail Out the People Movement; Boston Parents Organizing Network; The Powerful Students from CASH (Community Academy of Science and Health) and the youth organization Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST).

When Mayor Thomas Menino and his appointed school committee attempted to dismantle desegregation with a plan for a racist return to “neighborhood schools” in 2004, a similar community coalition organized and succeeded in stopping it. Menino pushed it again last year in his State of the City address, and has charged the new African-American superintendent of schools, Dr. Carol Johnson, with the task of making it happen.

Back in 1974, Menino was a leader of the racist “anti-busing” movement that sought to stop the African-American community’s access to equal quality education. Racist mobs threw rocks and attacked school children on buses. A national march against racism in Boston—25,000 strong—took place on Dec. 14, 1974, and turned back the racist tide.

For more information on the May 14 Community Summit, or to get involved with the Coalition for Equal, Quality Education, call 617-756-3657. □

What’s next? BAIL OUT PEOPLE MOVEMENT

Two Bail Out the People events People’s Economic Summit in New York City

Sunday, MAY 31 In conjunction with the U.N. Summit on the World Economic Crisis.

Starting Time—11:00 a.m. (tentative)
Inside the People’s Summit Tent in
Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, 47th St. & 1st Ave.

From June 1 to 3, The General Assembly of the U.N. will hold a summit on the world economic crisis in NYC. The U.N. is holding its own economic summit out of the concern that the 192 member nations of the U.N. are being marginalized by the G20 summit meetings.

In conjunction with this meeting, on Sunday, May 31, the Bail Out the People Movement will hold a People’s Economic Summit on the world economic crisis in NYC under a large tent in Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, outside of the U.N.

Come to the People’s Economic Summit—

Share information and insight on how the economic crisis is affecting poor and working people all over the U.S. and all over the world. Participate in panels and workshops. Help formulate a vision for a future free of social and economic inequality and injustice. Help plan the fight to make that vision a reality.

High on the list of priorities at the People’s Economic Summit will be planning for the G20 Summit meeting in NYC in September and forming structures that will make organizing for the G20 inclusive and effective. See BailOutPeople.Org or call 212-633-6646.

ORGANIZE—MOBILIZE—RESIST—UNITE—FIGHT BACK!

Protest The G20 Summit in New York City! Saturday, SEPT.19 & Sunday, SEPT. 20, 2009 (tentative dates)

Another world is possible— but we must fight for it!

- Bail Out People—Not Banks!
- Money for Social Needs— Not War & Greed!
- Jobs, Housing, Healthcare & Education are a Right!

The third G20 Summit is going to be in NYC on or around September 20. The G20 summits are taking place in response to the greatest worldwide economic crisis since the 1930s. However, the purpose of these high-level meetings of governments and bankers is not to rescue the people of the world from depression-level unemployment, evictions, homelessness, poverty, social and economic inequality and

war. These summits are about fixing the economic and financial order that puts profits before people—and fixing that system by creating more poverty, misery and suffering.

The last G20 Summit held in London in early April was met with massive protests both in London and throughout Europe. Now that the G20 is coming to the U.S., it is up to activists and organizations here to take up the challenge of uniting and working together to organize the widest protests possible. The Bail Out the People Movement urges activists and organizations to endorse the call for protest at the G20 Summit, and to begin organizing for it.

The potential for mass mobilization in September is truly infinite. So let’s begin the work required to realize that powerful potential.

GM restructuring will deepen capitalist crisis

By Fred Goldstein

General Motors has announced new mass layoffs, plant closings and the closing of dealerships. If this restructuring is allowed to go through, it means a deepening of the economic crisis for the working class. It shows the need to fight against the capitalist system, which is at the root of the crisis.

The big business media are talking about “stabilization” of the economy and signs of recovery. What they mean is recovery for the profitability of Citigroup, Wells Fargo, Bank of America and other banks. In fact, six of the biggest banks have set aside more than \$36 billion in the first quarter of this year for payouts in bonuses, salaries and other compensation. The lion’s share goes to executives and deal-makers.

Meanwhile, the economic downturn is breaking records for rapid increases in unemployment and a decline in industrial production. In the United States, 5.1 million workers have lost their jobs since December 2007, according to official statistics, and 25 to 30 million people are actually either unemployed or underemployed. The rise in unemployment of 4.1 percent since November 2007 is greater than at any time since the 1948-49 recession. The same holds for the 15.4 percent decline in industrial production. One week in March, first-time applications for unemployment insurance jumped from 640,000 to 667,000.

The latest reports from the Census Bureau state that more than 14 million housing units are vacant. The combined vacancy rate is almost 15 percent, which is higher than during previous recessions: 11 percent in 1991 and 9.4 percent in 1984. Meanwhile, homelessness is growing, families everywhere are doubling up and tripling up; children into their mid-thirties are living at home with their parents. Tent cities are spreading from coast to coast.

CALIFORNIA

Book tour highlights Marxist analysis of low-wage capitalism

By Kathy Durkin

Students, labor and community activists gathered to hear Fred Goldstein, author of “Low-Wage Capitalism: Colossus with Feet of Clay,” when he spoke on a recent three-city tour in California.

In San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles Goldstein put the theses of his recently published book in the context of the current global economic crisis, the prospects for working-class fightback and the need to challenge capitalism.

On April 14, Goldstein was joined by well-known Marxist author and activist Michael Parenti, whose newest book is “Contrary Notions.” They spoke to a standing-room-only audience at the Modern Times Bookstore in San Francisco. When Parenti introduced Goldstein, he explained that while some people think that Marxists are spouting theories, “The truth is that a Marxist analysis reflects reality.” After his presentation and discussion, Goldstein signed a number of books purchased by audience members.

The historically prominent Malcolm X Library in San Diego was the site of the second meeting and book-signing event, which was held on April 18. Gloria

The crisis is bound to intensify for the workers, as indicated by the latest announcement on the restructuring of General Motors.

The government has already given GM \$15.7 billion in bailout funds. In order to get an additional \$12 billion, the company had to come up with a plan to shrink itself and become profitable again.

GM has announced its new plan: It will lay off 23,000 production workers, in addition to the 10,000 white-collar layoffs it had already announced. It will close 16 of its 47 operating plants. And it will shut down half its 6,200 dealerships by the year 2014.

In 2007 the UAW made a major concession by agreeing to take responsibility for the health care plan of the auto workers. As an incentive, the company was supposed to give a one-time payment of \$20 billion to the plan. In the latest round of concessionary negotiations, GM and Washington pressured the UAW into accepting \$10 billion of that payment in GM stock, which makes the health care plan of the workers subject to speculation on the stock market.

The union will take 39 percent of GM stock and the government will own 50 percent—making it the majority stockholder if the deal goes through. However, GM may go into bankruptcy if the bondholders do not agree to convert their bonds into stock. They know that the stock is next to worthless, trading at anywhere from 5 cents to 15 cents on the dollar, and they are balking at the deal being offered.

How did this situation arise?

GM, Ford, Chrysler, Toyota, Nissan, Honda, Volkswagen and other auto companies have been in a ruthless capitalist competition for a larger share of the auto market in the U.S. and worldwide. In this struggle to capture markets they have created a U.S. auto industry with a combined capacity of 18.5 million cars a year. But

the workers and the middle class, staggering under low wages, credit card debt and job loss, can buy only about 9 million cars a year right now.

GM lost out in the competition and has to shrink because of capitalist overproduction. It is not the only auto company that has to cut back. Chrysler has shut down plants and laid off workers. Ford, which has shut down more than 20 plants and laid off tens of thousands of workers, will have to cut back even more. Toyota, now the largest auto producer in the world, is cutting back production and talking about shutting down factories.

So this unbridled competition for profits has led to a crisis for the working class of mass layoffs. But layoffs in the operations of the auto industry—which together with housing makes up the core of production in the U.S.—are only the beginning. More are to come. And this in the midst of a major, global economic contraction.

How does Ford Motor Co. view the crisis of GM and Chrysler? It is also restructuring. But it is all “part of a longer-term vision that would have Ford rise above its age-old competitors to form a new global Big Three with the two largest car makers, Toyota Motors and Volkswagen, AG.” (Wall Street Journal, April 25) Ford is boosting production of mid-size sedans like the Ford Fusion to “help it step up its drive to grab customers and markets from GM and Chrysler, which are slashing production.”

The GM formula for its own profitability is to destroy perfectly good factories that cost billions of dollars. However, they could be converted to produce vehicles for mass transportation like light rail, high-speed rail, buses, and other conveyances that could service cities and rural areas alike. This would reduce pollution, reduce the cost of transportation, and make it accessible to tens of millions who have no access to affordable mass transit now.

The road to profitability, as seen sepa-

rately by GM, Ford and Chrysler in their struggle against each other, is the road to disaster for the workers, both in the auto industry and outside it. That is the logic of the profit system.

Unemployment in the auto industry leads to unemployment in industries such as steel and other metals, rubber, glass, plastic, paint, microchips and computers, fabric, and all the parts supplying industries. In addition, layoffs will take place in all the communities surrounding the plants where stores and services have been supported by auto workers’ wages. The layoffs at the dealerships will also affect workers in the surrounding businesses.

Roots deep in capitalism

Despite all the explanations in the big business press of the causes of this crisis, the fact is that the hardship and suffering behind these statistics is caused by capitalist exploitation and the profit system.

The housing industry built millions of units in order to cash in on the profits from the housing bubble. The housing bubble was created by the banks and mortgage lenders gouging profits by pushing adjustable rate mortgages, knowing that interest rates were bound to rise and that millions would find their increased rates unaffordable.

Under capitalism, competition among corporations results in massive overproduction of goods as the bosses fight each other to capture markets and increase sales. While production races ahead, workers’ wages crawl slowly upward, remain the same or may even go down—as has been the case for the last 30 years. Sooner or later the system comes crashing down in a crisis when the workers cannot buy what they have produced at the prices the bosses demand to make a profit.

The profits come from the unpaid labor of the workers. They receive just enough to live on, but the goods and services they produce are worth far more than their wages. In other words, much of the labor is not paid for—it is done for free. That is where the profit comes from—the unpaid labor of the workers.

Capitalists own the means of production. Workers have to sell their ability to work—labor power—to the bosses. The bosses own what the workers create and sell it for a profit. That is capitalist exploitation. This is the way the entire system runs. Nothing is produced under capitalism unless it brings a profit to some employer.

But that unpaid labor is embedded in the product. It can only be turned into money when the sales take place. That is what the race for sales is all about—the race for profit.

The crisis of overproduction arises from capitalist exploitation. It can only be resolved by getting rid of the capitalist system and replacing it with a system that operates for human need instead of for profit. The means of sustaining life, the means of production, must be socially owned and operated by the workers themselves. That is socialism. □

Low-Wage Capitalism

A timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx’s law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval.

Order online at www.Leftbooks.com

Berta Joubert-Ceci, a leading organizer of the Philadelphia chapter of the International Action Center, and Goldstein spoke there to a multinational grouping of labor activists and students. Joubert-Ceci addressed in particular the struggles in Latin America and the need for worldwide solidarity with workers, especially immigrants here in the U.S.

Goldstein wound up his California trip by attending the Los Angeles Book Fair, where he met activists, signed books and got a number of requests to return to speak at future events on the West Coast.

Naomi Cohen, Judy Greenspan, Joan Marquardt, Bob McCubbin, and John Parker contributed to this article.

“With the capitalist system demonstrably unfair, irrational, and prone to intermittent crises, it is useful, indeed refreshing, to see a Marxist analysis of globalization and its effects on working people. Fred Goldstein’s **Low-Wage Capitalism** does exactly that.”

— Howard Zinn

Jobs for all: it’s not a dream

By Deirdre Griswold

It’s still dark but the alarm goes off. It takes a minute for your mind to clear.

Then your anxiety level rises as you realize: another day looking for work. You think about what to wear, what to say, where to go, how much you’ll have to spend on transportation and lunch, how many people will be on line ahead of you.

The odds are heavily against you in this imploding economy. At the end of the day, you will probably be even more “discouraged.” That’s not just a state of mind. It’s an actual category of the Bureau of Labor Statistics to describe those who’ve run out of unemployment insurance and have stopped actively seeking work, even though they want and need a job.

Once you reach that point, you’re not included in the official jobless rate.

Look around you. So many millions of people are out of work. And so many jobs need to be done.

If you and the people in your neighborhood were to get together and make a list, it would be long.

How is the housing where you live? Crowded? Dilapidated? Or maybe it looks okay but, with rising energy prices, people need better insulation. Fixing up housing provides all kinds of jobs. Put that on the list.

What about the schools, playgrounds and parks for the kids? Are they safe getting to school? Need more crossing guards or school buses? Once they’re at school, are there enough teachers? Books? Computers? Do they have a place to run around in the fresh air and let off steam between classes?

Lots of people could be hired to correct deficiencies there. Let’s add tree planting and building bike paths to the list, too.

And of course good public transportation.

Older people have special needs. Are they safe and comfortable? Does someone check on their health and keep them company? What kind of recreation is available? Put down senior centers and caregivers. And how about hiring some gardeners? Let’s make those centers beautiful and give the seniors a place to plant flowers and vegetables. In fact, let’s make the whole neighborhood beautiful.

There are so many people eager, desperate, to find work. And we’ve all heard about the trillions of dollars given to Wall Street to pep up the economy—which hasn’t worked. Trillions! Who ever heard of such huge numbers before this crisis!

If the government has that much money to commit, why not get the people to draw up their lists of needs, open up job centers in every community, and start matching up people looking for employment with the needs to be filled?

That would work. It’s called socialism. Uh-oh. Yes, the system we’ve been taught to believe is so bad. However, socialism is gaining in popularity while those who’ve been boosting capitalism are finding it harder and harder to sell.

Under capitalism, the economy has to turn a profit for a class of rich owners. But problems build up. Eventually, so many goods and services are produced while workers earn much less than the cost of what they’ve produced that there’s a surplus of everything.

Houses, cars, clothing: they can’t be sold for a profit. But profits are what capitalism is all about. So the owners cut back production and start laying off workers. Then the workers can buy even less. And the downward spiral begins.

Socialism doesn’t have this problem. There are no individual rich owners. The

factories, the infrastructure, the firms that provide services belong to everyone—which especially means the workers. There are no wealthy investors to skim off profits. The economy is driven by a plan, not by stock and commodities markets. If people need more of something, then that’s what is produced. If something becomes obsolete, that item or service is discontinued. But the workers aren’t laid off. Their right to a job is guaranteed.

We’re in a worldwide recession-depression right now. The worst-hit countries are those tied closest to the capitalist world market.

It was in just such a period as this—the Great Depression of the 1930s—that the differences between these two types of economic system, capitalism and socialism, became crystal clear.

In 1917, near the end of World War I, the workers and peasants of Russia had overthrown the czarist regime there and liberated the means of production. But the country was so poor and half-destroyed by invasion and war that for a while they had a hard time just restoring production to the pre-war level.

By 1928, however, the new Soviet Union was able to start its first five-year plan, based on socially-owned production and collectivized agriculture. Nothing like it had ever been done before. Nevertheless, it worked so well that the goals for the five-year plan were completed in four years.

By that time—1932—the capitalist world was in a terrible state. First the stock markets had collapsed, then the banks failed and businesses started laying off workers. By the mid-1930s, tens of millions of workers in the United States were jobless, and the same thing happened in all of the other capitalist countries.

But not in the Soviet Union. Even though

it was having political problems, the economy was stable and growing. Quite a few skilled U.S. workers went there looking for jobs during the Great Depression.

Russia wasn’t an ideal place for trying to build socialism, which is based on workers’ power and a planned economy. It was severely underdeveloped and had a very small working class. Almost immediately, the revolution had to defend itself against all of the capitalist powers, which mounted an invasion to crush this new system in the cradle.

Much could be said about how capitalism finally succeeded in destroying the Soviet Union. But here’s the point of this article: For its entire existence, the Soviet Union never had an unemployment problem. That came only after the USSR was broken up and capitalism was restored in the early 1990s.

So far, socialist revolutions have succeeded in less developed countries, which then have had to focus on trying to “catch up.”

That’s not the problem in the United States. Here there’s already in place the means to create a comfortable life for everyone. In fact, we could cut working hours and still have plenty. For example, with a 30-hour work week at no cut in pay, many more workers could be hired and everyone would have more time for family and leisure.

But the bosses scream at the very thought. Abundance is a huge problem for capitalism. Paradoxically, it leads to crisis, the destruction of jobs and a lower standard of living for workers.

Socialism is the only system that can handle abundance rationally, providing jobs for all doing what is needed and sustainable and not what a profit-hungry ruling class demands.

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WORKERS’ STRUGGLES HEAT UP IN EUROPE

By John Catalinotto

The German socialist writer Bertolt Brecht wrote, “Sometimes when you struggle you lose, but if you don’t struggle you’ve already lost.” Workers in various guerrilla-type actions—especially in France—are showing that even in the midst of the capitalist economic crisis, if you struggle, you might win.

FRANCE

Toyota workers win demands

After four days of blockading the Toyota plant in Onnaing in the north of France, workers on April 20 reached an agreement that won most of their demands. It was the first strike at the Toyota plant since it was set up in 2001. Since September, the plant’s 2,700 workers have been forced to take “partial unemployment,” where they are paid only 60 percent of their usual wages. They wanted 100-percent pay and thought that since Toyota is the fifth-richest enterprise in the world, it could pay up.

To put some muscle behind this demand, some 200 of 250 workers who had been on strike blocked all plant entrances starting April 16, preventing resupply of parts. In the end, Toyota agreed to pay the equivalent of 90 percent of normal take-home pay and partial pay for days on strike.

Electric workers cut prices, cut power

Workers in the state electrical company in France, EDF, now partly privatized, have been hitting manage-

ment with guerrilla actions this April to enforce their demands for a 10-percent pay raise and an end to outsourcing of EDF jobs. The government of Prime Minister Nicolas Sarkozy has condemned the union workers as “saboteurs” because clandestine job actions cut off electricity to parts of the Paris region during the strike.

If the striking workers lost some popular support by actions that inconvenienced the public, this was more than made up for when another union action switched 350,000 customers from peak to off-peak rates, a 50-percent saving. For hundreds of families that had been cut off by EDF for failure to pay bills, the union switched their lights back on.

Irish autoworkers continue sit-down

By Martha Grevatt

For a worker, losing a job is a devastating blow under any circumstances. All too often, the pain is compounded when a company gives short notice. Workers may be told only a few days or even a few hours beforehand that their jobs are gone.

Visteon, the auto parts maker spun off by Ford in 2000, may have set a record last month. On March 31 in Belfast, 210 workers were given six minutes’ notice that they were being terminated.

Yet the workers, who were members of the union Unite, refused to leave. “We have been left with no choice but to occupy the factory to save our jobs and to defend jobs for the people of Belfast,” stated Unite representative John Maguire.

FRANCE-GERMANY

Continental workers unite for protest

Over 1,000 workers from the Continental tire company’s plant in Clairoux, France, joined with their sisters and brothers at Continental’s plant in Hanover-Stöcken to demonstrate against layoffs in Germany. Some 3,000 jobs are threatened by Continental’s plans to close the two plants. The action was one of the first taken by work forces in neighboring countries.

The French workers did the traveling because Continental shareholders were meeting in the Hanover Congress Center,

which is where the workers demonstrated. Already almost half of the German work force was working short hours. Continental’s CEO Karl-Thomas Neumann said at the meeting that 6,000 workers were laid off in March and 25,000 workers would be on part-time work by the end of April.

German workers held placards welcoming their fellow workers from France. Some told the media they were encouraged by the militancy of the workers’ struggle there. Given the international organization of production by most large firms, it is apparent as May 1—International Workers’ Day—approaches that more such joint actions will be needed on a worldwide scale to defend jobs and salaries.

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Workers at the Visteon factory sit in to save 210 jobs.

occupying the plant in the Occupied North now for almost a month. They are demanding the full severance—“redundancy”—payments that they were entitled

to under the Ford contract.

At the time of the spinoff the workers were told that their contracts would mirror those at Ford, but the cash payments offered by KMPB, the current plant administrator, fall short of what they feel they are entitled to. Three weeks into the sit-down, KMPG offered a bigger settlement

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Capitalist swine flu

Every disaster—whether earthquake, flood or epidemic—exposes the fault lines in society. Such is the case with the possible pandemic—worldwide epidemic—of a virulent flu caused by a newly mutated virus. This human version of swine flu has hit Mexico most severely, with the United States a close second. It has rapidly spread to a dozen other countries.

Politically, the greatest threat is that right-wing demagogues will try to scapegoat Mexicans, especially Mexican immigrants, for the epidemic's spread. This is a serious political challenge to progressive forces in the U.S. It will require a redoubling of the already necessary effort to build solidarity between immigrant and U.S.-born workers, a solidarity that will be emphasized at May Day events across the country.

The attempt to blame Mexicans is not only despicable, it is way off. Look at these facts.

ABC News reported on April 28 that "Mexico's first suspected case of the swine flu was detected in the remote farming village of La Gloria" a month ago. Some 800 of the 2,000 people there got sick. "The most likely way that this young boy got the infection was from another person who had been in contact with the pigs," said Dr. Kathryn Edwards of Vanderbilt Medical Center.

What ABC failed to report was that the pigs were on a nearby industrial farm run by a subsidiary of Smithfield Farms, the anti-union, polluting, factory-farm monopoly based in Virginia and North Carolina. For years, the communities around these farms have been complaining about the unhealthy conditions and stench from thousands of pigs and their waste crowded into small areas.

Historian Mike Davis, a professor at the University of California at Irvine and author of "The Monster at Our Door: The Global Threat of Avian Flu," wrote in the Britain-based Guardian newspaper of April 27 that the "fecal mire of an industrial pigsty" was the likely environment in which a new flu

virus could develop. Smithfield, wrote Davis, will ferociously resist any efforts to change its dangerous but highly profitable production processes.

An experienced writer on these issues, Davis also mentioned three obstacles to an efficient and effective defense against any pandemic: the weakness of the U.S. public health system, the negative attitude of the U.S. and other wealthy countries toward promoting cutting-edge public health facilities in the poorer countries, and Swiss-based Roche Pharmaceutical's patent on the flu medicine Tamiflu, which prevents poor countries from developing generic anti-viral medicines.

The first lesson of this is that the U.S. has a disgraceful record regarding health care. The trillions spent on war should be used instead to set up a world-class national health system and bypass the overpriced, profit-guzzling health care industry.

Secondly, don't blame Mexicans for this outbreak. Investigate Smithfield and take action against the polluters.

Next, pressure from imperialist banks over the last 30 years has forced poor countries to cut their public health outlays. This has not only debilitated health care, it has increased the danger of pandemics. Instead of criminalizing immigrant workers and militarizing the border with Mexico, the U.S. should be supporting Mexico's efforts to improve its health system—especially since U.S. corporations like Smithfield are making huge profits there, by super-exploiting Mexican workers.

And lastly, the monopoly on new drugs held by a few privately owned pharmaceuticals impedes the development of a worldwide supply of generic medicines. For the health of humanity, medical knowledge must be shared and all countries be free to manufacture their own medicines.

This all points to one conclusion: that the capitalist system as a whole is an obstacle to protecting the life and health of humanity when faced with swine flu or any other possible pandemic. □

WORKERS' STRUGGLES HEAT UP

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PORTUGAL—

April 25 sizzles, one week before May Day

Portugal's annual April 25 march drew more than the usual tens of thousands to Lisbon to gather and march for tradition's sake and also reflected a new mood. The action celebrates that this year is the 35th anniversary of the 1974 revolution, when the junior officers of an army weary of colonial wars led a mass soldiers' coup that overthrew the decades-long fascist regime. This unleashed a mass workers' movement that in the following 18 months established strong pro-worker laws and also helped the respective liberation movements free the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau and East Timor.

Now, with 600,000 people unem-

ployed out of a population of 10 million, Portugal has been hard hit by the crisis. The front page of Avante, the newspaper of the Portuguese Communist Party, says that what is needed is "a new April." This means a new round of broad working-class struggle to restore the gains that have been severely eroded since that earlier uprising.

In Portugal, in the neighboring Spanish state (where official unemployment is over 17 percent), in France and throughout Europe, millions of workers in the imperialist countries will march on May Day. From the mood of these marches, traditionally led by unions, it will be possible to get an idea of the temperature of the class struggle in each country. In the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the protests may take a more anti-imperialist character. In both cases, it will be a day to watch.

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Long live May Day

Continued from page 1

Foner quoted an 1887 report from the New York Bureau of Labor Statistics: "The year 1886 has witnessed a more profound and far more extended agitation among the members of organized labor than any previous year in the history of our country. ... The year 1886 will be forever remembered as one of the greatest importance in the battle between capital and labor in the United States."

Foner continued, "The year 1886 will also be 'forever remembered' as the year that May Day was born as a day of workers' celebration and agitation."

In the spring of 2006, immigrant workers, primarily Latinos and Latinas, poured into the streets not just once but several times. That was exactly 120 years after the birth of May Day.

In 1886 Chicago workers, almost all immigrants, had waged an enormous class battle.

The workers in Chicago lived and worked in some of the worst conditions. They too faced a dire economic crisis. There were massive layoffs and cuts in workers' pay and benefits. Then too there were constant media scares about "terrorism."

Then came a series of strikes and demonstrations that culminated on May 1, 1886. The demonstration shut the city down in a show of strength by workers not seen in the U.S. before. They demanded an eight-hour workday.

The state responded with heavy repression. Chicago police attacked a peaceful rally in Haymarket Square, where a provocateur tossed a bomb. Eight of the most visible leaders of this working class struggle were charged with conspiracy to murder. That was solely based on their fiery and class-conscious speeches.

Eventually four of these heroic leaders would die on the gallows.

We should never forget their names: Albert Parsons, August Spies, Adolph Fisher and George Engel.

May Day 2009: Conditions behind the actions

The driving forces for the demonstrations today are as brutal and inhumane as in 1886.

The Southern Poverty Law Center reported that Latinas and Latinos in the South are "under siege and living in fear—fear of the police, fear of the government and fear of criminals who prey on immigrants."

The report found that 68 percent of the Latinas and Latinos interviewed suffered racism in their daily life and 41 percent had not been paid for their work. In New Orleans that number becomes a whopping 80 percent.

Thirty-two percent reported on-the-job injuries. The rate of deaths for Mexican workers in the South was 1 in 6,200, more than double the national average. Some 77 percent of Latina women were sexually harassed on the job and 47 percent of respondents knew someone victimized by the police.

Muslim and South Asian people also continue to live in fear as the anti-immigrant climate leads to racist stereotypes of this besieged community.

May 12 marks the one-year anniversary of the largest U.S. anti-immigrant raid in history. Postville, Iowa, was also the scene of the first large raid where immigrants were charged with "identify theft." This charge is a felony and more serious than the lesser charges of immigration violations.

The meat processing plant Agriprocessors recruited Somali immigrants to fill the jobs. These immigrants and their advocates currently report brutal conditions. Workers were promised a bonus and a free month's rent if they moved to Postville. They never received them.

Reports like this from immigrants can be found about every town and city across the country. Day laborers organized in the group

Jornaleros Unidos de Queens report that police harassment has risen tenfold. And the economic crisis is driving not just immigrants but unemployed workers born here to join day laborers waiting on corners for jobs. Where before there were 50 or 100 workers, day-laborer groups are now reporting that hundreds of workers show up each day.

Solidarity needed

A glimpse of the many leaflets for May Day 2009 shows an impressive call for class unity. The demonstrations are calling on President Barack Obama to pass a just and humane comprehensive immigration reform that must lead to documenting the undocumented.

But from Rochester, N.Y., to San Antonio, from New York City to Los Angeles and everywhere in between, the demands for May Day 2009 also reflect issues for all the working class.

Some of these demands are "Pass the Employee Free Choice Act," "Workers' rights are immigrant rights" and "Jobs for all at union wages."

Imagine what a victory for these demands could do for many of the most oppressed groups in the U.S. For example, Black youth suffer an extremely high rate of unemployment due to unbridled racism. Like many others sectors of the working class, Black youth would benefit enormously with the passage of a jobs program.

The International Monetary Fund reported on April 21 that the "global recession will be deeper and the recovery slower" than had been previously reported.

During difficult economic times, tensions and divisions among workers can develop and intensify. An anti-immigrant demagogue like Tom Tancredo may blame immigrants for the crisis. But the bailout of the bankers shows who is really to be blamed. All workers' anger should be directed at the ruling class, not at other sectors of the working class.

The May Day demonstrations are seen as immigrant rights events. And they are. But they are much more than that. They have the potential of widening and deepening into a class-wide struggle for all workers and oppressed.

In 2006, when workers stayed away from work on May Day in record numbers throughout the country, they showed the mighty strength of the concept raised then: "A day without a Mexican."

Can May Day 2010 reflect this concept: "A day without a worker?" How frightening that would be to Wall Street.

Gutierrez is coordinator of the May 1 Coalition for Worker & Immigrant Rights in NYC.

Irish autoworkers sit-down

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but the workers rejected it as inadequate.

The sit-down—the second in Ireland this year after the Waterford Crystal takeover—has united Irish nationalist and British loyalist workers in common cause. Gerry Adams, president of the nationalist Sinn Féin party and member of Parliament, personally visited the sit-downers.

"Ford controlled the purse strings and everything that was happening here," Adams told the workers. He called Ford's conduct "disgraceful." Even an MP from the Democratic Unionist Party, whose constituents support continued British rule, came out against Visteon/Ford management.

Supporters have held rallies and picketed Ford dealerships to protest the rotten treatment of the Visteon workers. KMPG has sought a court order to have the occupiers evicted from the Belfast plant. The union vows that it will contest any eviction order. □

The real pirates of the seas

Insurance giants profit from Somalia’s poverty

By Caleb T. Maupin

There are some pirates who don’t use firearms to seize vessels on the high seas. There are certain pirates who commit their acts of oceanic theft from thousands of miles away, in cool office buildings in Chicago and London.

Patrick G. Ryan is the founder and chairman of the Aon Corporation, the world’s largest “risk management services” conglomerate. He doesn’t wear an eye patch and has no hook in place of his hand, although he could afford one made of solid gold.

In addition to helping his corporation obtain a net income of \$685 million in 2004, Ryan took some time off that year to hold a personal fundraiser for George W. Bush’s reelection campaign at his estate in Winnetka, Ill., where Laura Bush and many of Ryan’s closest friends enjoyed a lobster dinner. They never even bothered to pay the \$80,000 the city asked for as reimbursement for the massive police protection the city provided for the event. (Chicago Tribune, Jan. 17, 2005) Though Ryan is a Republican and strong Bush supporter, he was made a member of President Barack Obama’s inaugural committee and is working to get the 2016 Olympics in Chicago. (thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com, Nov. 25)

Ryan’s Aon Corporation, along with others in the insurance business, such as the London-based International Securities Solutions Inc., has taken advantage of the recent rise in so-called “Somali piracy” by astronomically raising insurance rates on ships traveling through the Indian Ocean.

Fight Imperialism, Stand Together calls for the release of Abduwali Abdukhadir Muse—the young teen from Somalia who was brought to New York and arraigned in a federal court—and that he be allowed to return to his family in Somalia.

Muse, who according to his parents is only 16, has been charged with five counts, the most serious of which, piracy, carries a life sentence if convicted. The charges stem from the April 8 seizure of the Danish-owned Maersk Alabama, which was flying a U.S. flag. The ship had passed through the Gulf of Aden and was in the Indian Ocean, 350 miles off the coast of Somalia.

From April 8 to 12, the captain of the Maersk was allegedly detained by Muse and three of his companions. The incident was ended after Navy Seals shot to death three young Somali men aboard a tugboat anchored to their destroyer, the USS Bainbridge. Muse was aboard the destroyer trying to negotiate the release of the captain of the Maersk, as was agreed to, when the three youths were killed.

What jurisdiction does the U.S. have over events that occurred off the coast of the Horn of Africa? Moreover, the so-called pirates have not killed anyone they

Eleven percent of the world’s seaborne petroleum is carried in tankers through the Gulf of Aden, a location specifically targeted by “pirates” of Somali descent. (examiner.com, April 13) Even though the risk of a ship being seized in the Gulf of Aden has gone up only 1 percent, the folks at Aon Corporation and their associates in “risk management services” have raised the cost of insuring a vessel from an average of \$900 to \$9,000, according to military historian James F. Dunnigan. (strategypage.com, Oct. 18)

Presently, however, less than 10 percent of vessels in the Gulf of Aden even bother to be insured at all, as the costs have gone up so much. (time.com, April 20)

Aon rewarded for corporate crime

With maritime insurance profits going through the roof, Aon Corporation still felt it was necessary to cut the pensions of its British workers, some by as much as 50 percent. (timesonline.co.uk, April 8) A spokesman for Aon UK told the Times that this was necessary “to protect our business” and ensure that Aon can “emerge from the recession strong and successful.”

On Jan. 8, Aon Corporation received the largest fine ever given for financial crime in the history of the England. It was fined 5.25 million pounds for making \$7 million worth of “suspicious payments” to unnamed sources abroad, without checking to make sure these firms were not involved in “corruption.” The fine was originally 7.5 million pounds, but Aon was rewarded for its “cooperation” with the investigation by a 30 percent cut in its fine. (ifaonline.co.uk, Jan. 9)

have captured. The only people killed so far have been the three young Somali men, killed by U.S. Seals, and a French national killed by French commandoes who stormed a yacht that had been seized.

The popular media can show sympathy for the crews of ships being seized and their family members. But, rarely do the media that have played up this human drama delve into the daily existence of the people of Somalia, Iraq or any place around the world that has been under siege from imperialist war and intervention.

Events in history give justification to the seizing of ships by so-called pirates from Somalia.

Barrels of toxic materials have been dumped off the coast of Somalia. This waste—nuclear waste in some cases—washed ashore after a tsunami in late 2004. Thousands have become sick with strange rashes, respiratory infections, stomach illnesses and hundreds have died. The toxic materials are coming from European companies that pay others to dispose of nuclear and other types of waste. Instead of responsibly paying to have the waste disposed of in Europe, they pay smaller fees to have it dumped off the Somali coast, ignoring the resulting suffering of the people there.

Additionally, more than \$300 million a year in seafood is stolen from the waters

When interviewed by Time magazine, an executive at Cooper Gay, a British insurance giant making huge profits from the “piracy” off the coast of Somalia, was asked if some of the profits made could be used to “develop” Somalia and prevent the poverty that causes the starving people of Somalia to seize ships and take people for ransom. He responded by snorting, “It’s not down to insurance companies to promote peace in Somalia.” (time.com, April 20)

He should have said that actually the opposite is true. Dunnigan said that a 1,000 percent hike in insurance costs for vessels would be “modest.” (strategypage.com, Oct. 18) The fact that impoverished, starving people in Somalia are reduced to “piracy” in order to survive has made the folks in the insurance business richer than ever. If anything, they see it as their responsibility to make sure it continues.

Aon Corporation announced that its revenue for 2007 was \$7.15 billion. But with insurance costs for those traveling across the Gulf of Aden going up 1,000 percent as Dunnigan estimated, Aon is bound to do even better in the coming months. Yet the company still found it necessary to reduce its British workers’ pensions to “protect” itself and be able to “re-emerge” in the “challenging conditions” they now face.

Is it ironic that a few years before Bush would bomb Somalia and kill thousands of innocent civilians, his spouse Laura was eating lobster at the home of a man who would use the impoverishment of Somalia as an opportunity to line his ever-hungry pockets? □

near Somalia by ships from other nations that employ trawling, a fishing method that involves the dragging of huge nets across the ocean floor. Trawling not only damages the natural environment, but is illegal off the coast of many nations. It robs the many villages and towns on the Somali coast that have relied on fishing for centuries.

Added to these charges are colonial and imperialist occupation and subterfuge. The U.S. undermined progressive developments in East Africa in the 1970s, caused a war between Somalia and Ethiopia, tied Somalia to foreign aid and occupied the country in the early 1990s, killing thousands of Somali people.

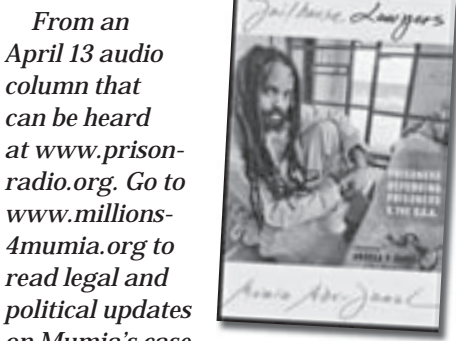
Currently there are more than two dozen military vessels patrolling waters off the coast of Somalia. Somalia is occupied by foreign troops propping up a weak regime beholden to the West.

The EU, the U.S. and other countries discuss how to deal with piracy coming from Somalia, yet reparations to Somalia for years of imperialist intervention, theft of sea life and the dumping of toxic waste are not being discussed. The only option being put on the table is military action.

FIST demands there be no further imperialist intervention; that reparations be paid; that the foreign troops in service of Western world imperialism be removed from Somalia; that all ships off

Mumia Abu-Jamal from death row

‘Of pirates & piracy’



From an April 13 audio column that can be heard at www.prison-radio.org. Go to www.millions-4mumia.org to read legal and political updates on Mumia’s case.

Above is the cover of Mumia’s new book. See related article on page 3.

In the news of late is the piracy drama off Africa’s Horn, the eastern coast of Somalia.

All of a sudden, piracy is a problem, one needing military if not global solutions.

Every petty politician is bum-rushing the mike to spout off on how pirates are “thugs,” “criminals,” or the latest Western curse, “terrorists.”

Such pronouncements almost always leave me cold or, at best, ambivalent, for behind these events lies a history that cries out for clarity and perspective.

If piracy is a crime when individuals do it, what is it when states do it?

Who can deny that America was stolen and swindled from the Indians? Or that millions of people were stolen from Africa to work for them for centuries?

Is that piracy or just plain policy?

Piracy did occur in the 17th and 18th centuries, and this was either cases of conflict between colonial powers (where British “privateers,” for example, would target and steal from Spanish ships), or simply in pursuit of profits.

The Somali state has been absent for a generation, and as such, what is today’s piracy but making a living, albeit a dangerous one?

When Ethiopia was armed and egged on to invade Somalia several years ago by the Bush administration, was that state piracy?

When the U.S. invaded and occupied Iraq in 2003, removed its government, imposed its puppets, bombed its people, and ran a third of its population into exile—based on lies—was this piracy of one nation against another or “national security”?

Pirates are retail; nations are wholesale. Who are the “thugs,” the “criminals,” the real pirates? To my knowledge, no band of pirates has ever stolen a nation. Guess who has? □

the coast return to their nations; and that Abduwali Abdukhadir Muse be set free and returned to his family in Somalia.

U.S. Hands off Somalia!

U.S. Hands off Africa!

Fight Imperialism, Stand Together



Abduwali Abdukhadir Muse

Coalición inmigratoria une a comunidades contra redadas del ICE

Por Francisco Romero, Asociación Raza Press and Media de Los Ángeles

La conferencia de la Coalición Inmigratoria del Sur de California, una coalición compuesta por varias decenas de organizaciones, reunió exitosamente a casi 400 personas de toda la región el 11 de abril con la meta de “forjar la unidad entre los distintos sectores de la comunidad para unirse a esta lucha, desde oficiales elegid@s, hasta estudiantes, trabajadores/as, profesionales, líderes de la comunidad lesbiana, gay, bisexual y transgénera, maestr@s, padres y madres, líderes comunitari@s, sindicalistas, intelectuales, y muchas personas más”.

El histórico acto comenzó con una nutrida rueda de prensa en el Complejo Educacional Santee, una escuela secundaria del barrio sur-central de Los Ángeles que fue anfitriona del evento.

La conferencia consistió de varias presentaciones principales por legisladores locales durante la sesión de la mañana y una declaración de solidaridad del Sindicato de Maestros Unidos de Los Ángeles.

Luego hubo una sesión con nueve talleres distintos. Cada taller se condujo para permitir que l@s participantes discutieran sobre la forma de organizar para oponerse a la represión que se está desarrollando en

contra de los/as trabajadores/as indocumentad@s en los estados de la región. Los tópicos variaron desde “Estrategias y tácticas para ponerle fin a las redadas del ICE,” “Participación de padres y maestros en la lucha por la reforma”, “Derechos laborales y migratorios”, “El papel de los medios de comunicación”, hasta “la participación de estudiantes y jóvenes”.

El nombre ICE son las siglas en inglés del Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas comúnmente conocido como La Migra. Es la agencia de los EEUU responsable por las redadas contra trabajadores/as inmigrantes y sus familias.

En el taller sobre “Reforma inmigratoria justa y humana”, l@s panelistas y participantes acordaron comenzar el proceso de organizar un comité para redactar una contrapropuesta más progresista que las que se están discutiendo actualmente en el Congreso. Quedó muy claro que todas las actuales propuestas contienen componentes que están dirigidos hacia el aumento de la militarización de la frontera entre los EEUU y México y llaman al reclutamiento, entrenamiento y despliegue de más agentes del ICE en los estados fronterizos para aterrorizar a las comunidades inmigrantes.

Ron Gochez, de la Asociación de Educadores de la Raza, uno de los maestros de ceremonias del evento, dijo “Hemos cumplido nuestro objetivo primordial de unir a un amplio sector de nuestra comunidad bajo nuestros tres principios, los cuales exigen la legalización completa, el fin a las redadas del ICE, y NO a los programas de trabajadores/as temporales.”

Estaba claro durante el evento que estudiantes, trabajadores/as, activistas y organizador@s de varias ciudades del sur de California estaban presentes y participaban en el diálogo y la discusión, desarrollando una visión más allá de las marchas y protestas, para organizar en nuestras comunidades la resistencia y dar una alternativa a las políticas de miedo y opresión.

“Un aspecto importante que define el éxito de esta conferencia fue la presencia de decenas de organizaciones populares e independientes, formadas por trabajadores/as y comunidades para resistir las redadas del ICE, así como la participación de la Alianza Latinoamericana de los Derechos del Inmigrante de San Francisco,” dijo Daniel Montes, miembro de la Unión del Barrio del área sur central de Los Ángeles. “La lucha comunitaria de la ALDI, resultó en la aprobación de una ordenanza municipal que permite la distribución de tarjetas de identificación a tod@s l@s residentes, incluyendo l@s inmigrantes, para que sean reconocidas y satisfechas las necesidades de los grupos marginados en nuestras comunidades”.

Al final de la conferencia, l@s moderador@s de los 10 talleres reportaron a la asamblea general lo que se había discutido en cada taller. Se aprobaron propuestas concretas para un plan de acción después del Primero de Mayo. “La capacidad de las comunidades para desafiar independientemente a los aparatos de propaganda dominados por intereses corporativos y capitalistas, donde nuestras comunidades están constantemente presentadas como chivos expiatorios, fue un gran ejemplo de autodeterminación; esto es, nuestra comunidad decidiendo por sí sola el curso de sus luchas a través de movilizaciones, medios de comunicación y organización comunitarios, fueron centrales en esta conferencia”, declaró Francisco Romero, un corresponsal de la Asociación Raza Press and Media quien participó en el reportaje del evento e hizo una presentación en un panel.

Según los/as organizadores/as de la conferencia, el enfoque del evento era desarrollar un plan de acción para construir un movimiento para la movilización y organización más allá del sur de California. Esta red se centralizaría en torno a tres principios básicos de unidad y trabajaría para continuar la resistencia y organización en nuestras comunidades contra el terror de la Migra que está respaldada tanto por el partido Demócrata como el Republicano. □



San Diego, May 1, 2008.

WW PHOTO: BOB MCCUBBIN

Primero de Mayo:

¡TODOS/AS A LA CALLE!

Continúa de página 1

En el 2006, los/as trabajadores/as inmigrantes y personas solidarias revivieron la tradición del Día de los/as Trabajadores/as en Estados Unidos cuando participaron en manifestaciones y paros laborales que incluyeron a millones de trabajadores/as.

Este año, el Primero de Mayo será conmemorado con manifestaciones en Nueva York, Los Ángeles, Detroit y en otras ciudades y pueblos de costa a costa. Una vez más, los/as trabajadores/as inmigrantes y sus partidarios/as se movilizarán para exigir reformas inmigratorias a favor de los/as trabajadores/as y un fin a las detenciones, redadas y deportaciones que han separado a miles de familias.

Los/as trabajadores/as nacidos/as aquí tienen muchas razones para unirse a sus hermanas y hermanos inmigrantes para que los/as empresarios/as y la clase gobernante tengan claro que “ningún/a trabajador/a es ilegal.” La solidaridad entre toda la clase trabajadora es un componente necesario para combatir el racismo y crear el tipo de unidad que pueda repeler los continuos ataques contra todos/as los/as trabajadores/as y oprimidos/as.

La riqueza creada por la clase obrera es absorbida por el barril sin fondo de la avaricia capitalista a pasos cada día más rápidos. Los dólares en impuestos pagados por los/as trabajadores/as han sido desviados por billones hacia el rescate de los bancos y corporaciones y para el financiamiento de las continuas guerras del Pentágono y las ocupaciones en Irak y Afganistán.

Mientras tanto, los despidos masivos y el desempleo aumentan. Los salarios, las pensiones y los beneficios están siendo recortados. Los recortes presupuestarios amenazan los servicios sociales que aún quedan. La educación de calidad es solamente un costoso sueño para muchos/as jóvenes. Las ejecuciones hipotecarias y los desahucios están devastando las ciudades y comunidades mientras crece la población sin techo.

El Primero de Mayo es una oportunidad perfecta para que la clase obrera de todos los orígenes, edades y nacionalidades se unan para exigir justicia social y económica y a la vez muestren solidaridad con los/as trabajadores/as inmigrantes. Ya sea la consigna de “El trabajo es un derecho” o “Moratoria en las ejecuciones hipotecarias y desahucios”, ahora es el momento para que los/as trabajadores/as afirmen sus exigencias.

Mientras el colapso capitalista se profundiza, los/as trabajadores/as seguirán descubriendo las grandes contradicciones de un sistema que crea riquezas fabulosas para una pequeña minoría y pobreza creciente para la mayoría. Las condiciones objetivas van a crear la base para un entendimiento más profundo por parte de los/as trabajadores/as de que sus metas y necesidades son irreconciliables con las de los capitalistas.

Cada grito demandando justicia social y económica, cada paso hacia la unidad y la solidaridad, acercan el día cuando los/as trabajadores/as como clase social puedan actuar conjuntamente en su propio beneficio para reclamar las riquezas que ellos/as mismos/as crean y utilizarlas para el beneficio de la humanidad, no para enriquecer a unos pocos. □

